

Mississippi



Forest Health Highlights

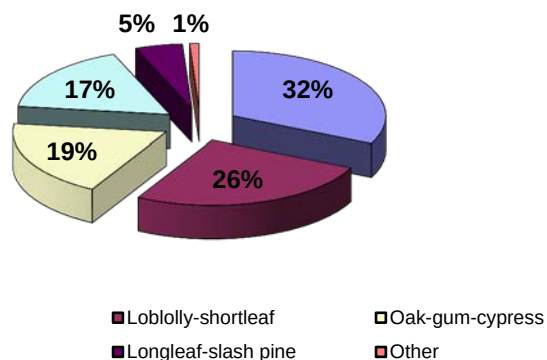
2012

The Resource

Mississippi's forests cover 19.9 million acres, more than 65% of the state's land area. Some 13.1 million acres of the state's forested land is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 1.1 million acres are in national forests. Mississippi's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout the state. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress.



Mississippi Forest Type Distribution



Forest Influences and Programs

Don't Move Firewood Campaign was redesigned in 2012. Radio spots were ran during the Ole Miss games on 24 Mississippi radio stations. The radio spots were identical to the "Don't Move Firewood" radio spots in the other participating states (AL, LA, OK, AR, TN, FL, NC, and TX). Ten billboards were posted across the State of MS to spread the message. Promotional items for the website www.dontmovefirewood.org will be given out at wildlife extravaganzas, camping shows and any other events throughout the state during the next year.

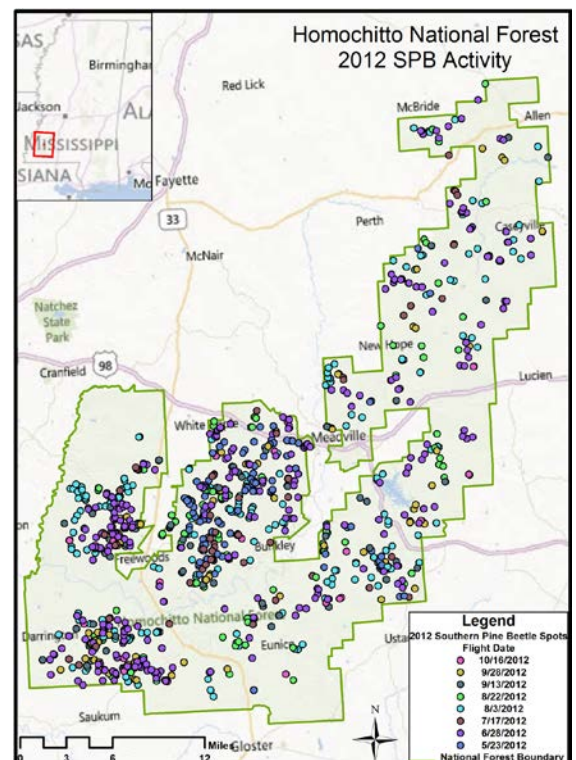


Redbay Ambrosia Beetle was detected for the first time in Jackson County, MS in July, 2009. This insect carries the fungus that causes Laurel Wilt Disease. Since its introduction on the East Coast, it has caused considerable mortality to redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, and to a lesser degree other species of Lauraceae. Current distribution records indicate the disease is present from North Carolina to Florida on the East Coast, as well as coastal Mississippi and Alabama. During the summer of 2011 the disease was also discovered in Marengo Co., AL (east of Meridian, MS). The infestation in Mississippi continues to expand, and is now present throughout the majority of Jackson Co. in redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, as well as camphor tree. The beetle, but not the pathogen, has also been confirmed in Harrison County, MS. Collaborative research between MSU, MFC, and the USDA Forest Service has led to the conclusion that the beetle was spread to Mississippi by human movement of infested materials from beetles along the Atlantic Coast of the U.S., rather than through a spate introduction through a local port.



Southern pine beetle (SPB) has historically been Mississippi's most significant forest insect pest. Populations statewide were very low for the last 12-15 years. However, in 2012, activity began to pick up. Over 1,060 SPB spots have been reported to date in 2012, mostly in and around the Homochitto National Forest, and secondarily in and around the Bienville and Tombigbee National Forests in central Mississippi. More than 1,500 acres have been affected. There were 156 total spots affecting approximately 185 acres on private lands.

Southern pine beetle (SPB) Prevention Program: The MFC, in cooperation with Mississippi State University (Mississippi State University Extension Service, Forestry and Wildlife Research Center, and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station), and the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Protection Southern Region continues to administer a comprehensive SPB Prevention/Education Program to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning for the reduction of SPB hazard. In addition to the educational aspects of this



program, there is an associated statewide cost-share program to assist landowners in getting the pre-commercial and 1st commercial thinning accomplished, as well as cost-share components aimed at supplementing loggers who thin enrolled acres, and foresters who write forest stewardship plans for enrolled acres. Currently, the program is only in effect for the southern half of Mississippi, but will be expanded statewide in 2013.



Kerry Britton, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Kudzu is a non-native, invasive weed that aggressively spreads and outcompetes desirable plants, including trees forests in the Southeast. A kudzu mitigation project to assist landowners was initiated in cooperation with the North-Central Mississippi RC&D. 186 acres were treated in Benton, Lafayette, Panola, Pontotoc, Tate and Tippah counties aiding 19 landowners. An additional grant from the USFS was received for \$250,000 to help in the fight of kudzu in North MS. This treatment will begin next year and the progress report will be in the 2013 report.

Cogongrass is a non-native, invasive plant that has been spreading aggressively in Mississippi in recent years. It takes over native grasses and vegetation and is a fire hazard under pine plantations. The severity and extent of infestations have increased considerably in the disturbed forests following hurricane Katrina in 2005. The state has a Cogongrass Task Force that is coordinating efforts to assist landowners and agencies with control/management of this species. The Mississippi Forestry Commission has developed a Statewide Campaign on Cogongrass Awareness, Identification and Suppression. An invasive species spraying program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act resulted in herbicide treatment on more than 2000 acres in over 13,500 different locations throughout 20 Mississippi counties during 2011. In 2012, a USFS redesign grant funded the revisiting of these tracts where retreatment was needed. Overall, 348 landowners received an additional treatment of herbicide on their property. A total of 4833 spots, covering 584.79 acres were retreated and the grant funded \$149,143.97 in treatments at no cost to the landowners.



J.R. Meeker, Florida Division of Forestry, Bugwood.org

Sudden Oak Death surveys were conducted again in 2012 by pathologists from Auburn University, Alabama. The surveys focused on baiting water courses with susceptible leaves to detect the presence of the pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*) downstream from potential sources. If established in or outside of horticultural nurseries that have received potentially infected stock from shippers in California, the pathogen can show up in drainage water. A positive stream baiting obtained in late 2007 outside a nursery in the Jackson area caused concern initially. Sampling has continued at this and other locations through 2012. While the one site remains positive, no other detections have been made at other sites. At present, the pathogen is not considered to be established in the natural environment.

Forest Health Assistance in Mississippi

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